DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 094 FL 015 898

AUTHOR Moraes, Euzi Rodrigues
TITLE Linguistic Variance in Regional Planning.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, San Francisco, CA, April 15-20, 1986). Document contains light, broken type.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Planning; Foreign Countries; *Language Planning; Language Role; *Language Variation; Multilingualism; *Portuguese; *Regional Dialects; Standard Spoken Usage
IDENTIFIERS *Brazil

ABSTRACT

By some standards, Brazil would be considered linguistically homogeneous because more than 85 percent of the population speaks Portuguese, but this view does not account for the multitude of dialects and Indian languages spoken there or for the German-speaking or other bilingual groups in the country. In addition, little information is available about the participation of those groups in the country's educational system. Regional planning in language education in Brazil can no longer ignore the country's linguistic and social history. Brazilian Portuguese is undergoing a de-creolization process bringing the variants closer to a standard usage, but in certain circumstances of migration and lowered educational standards, a re-creolization could occur. The educational program is currently not addressing students' real language needs. A plan is needed for the following purposes: (1) to identify regional and social language varieties and set up local targets, (2) to adapt materials and syllabuses that will facilitate development of social grammars for those targets, (3) to encourage self-expression in the local variety, and (4) to introduce the standard norm gradually by means of dialectal translation. This plan could be carried out experimentally in a vernacular-speaking community, in a way similar to a Norwegian experiment reported by Bull in 1982. This kind of planning, while seemingly outdated, is the appropriate direction for Brazil to take. (MSE)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED273094

# LINGUISTIC VARIANCE
# IN
# REGIONAL PLANNING

EUZI RODRIGUES MORAES,
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL
DO ESPÍRITO SANTO, BRAZIL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Euzi Rodrigues Moraes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PAPER TO BE PRESENTED AT THE 1986 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, APRIL 16 - 20 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.

FL015898

# LINGUISTIC VARIANCE IN REGIONAL PLANNING

By Euzi Rodrigues Moraes

It may be the case that language in educational planning is not felt as a necessity except in multilingual societies such as India and the African countries, where a European language has usually competed with native languages both in academic and social life.

Brazil is not typically a multilingual society. According to Fishman (in Soares, 1983), a country can be said to be linguistically homogeneous when at least 85% of its population speak a major language and there are no significant minority language groups among the remaining 15%.

This seems to be the case in Brazil. However, the Brazilian linguistic unity myth, which is upheld by large sectors of the Brazilian society, falls through in the face of the figures that follow.

As far back as 1965, Rodrigues said: "The Indian peoples in Brazil still speak around 100-150 languages". According to the same scholar, these languages were practically unknown to science up to the mid-fifties. As Indian linguistics advances, new discoveries are added to the linguistics list.

It should also be added that it is not only native Indian languages that break up the country's supposed linguistic unity. Europeans and Asians have also contributed to Brazilian multilingualism. In the specific case of my home State, the State of Espírito Santo, a variety of German is still the mother tongue of many children who come to our schools to acquire reading and writing. It is widely known that these German-speaking communities have had their access to formal education made difficult by the indifference of the educational authorities. Not that the official bodies are the only ones to blame. The scarcity of data available shows that this is an area which has barely been touched upon by research. To my knowledge, the State Office of Education is totally lacking in information on such communities and no reliable statistics have been identified for use in this paper. In other words, we do not know the size of the German-speaking and bilingual groups of

children attending school in those areas nor are we informed of the rate of drop-out and retention among German-Brazilian pupils, let alone teaching methods and programmes.

Apart from this language plurality, we still have to consider that the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil is in fact a set of sub-languages or dialects which cut across regions and the social layers of society.

The historical differences between Portugal and Brazil have determined the nature of linguistic variation in those two countries. Whereas in Portugal the standard language is closely related syntactically to the popular dialects, in Brazil we are confronted with a syntactic distance that sets standard Brazilian Portuguese as an ideal norm not fully realized in any actual uses of the language. This ideal norm has been further idealized by Brazilians as the only correct form of language. It is hard to overestimate the role of the school in this context. The Brazilian linguist Miriam Lemle (1978) says that the teacher's task is not to lead pupils to abandon the use of their "wrong" grammar to replace it by "correct" grammar. It is rather, she says, the task of assisting them to acquire competence in the use of the socially privileged language norm, which she sees as a second language. She implies that the standard language is but an alternative mode of expression. Therefore, she views standard language teaching as an opportunity open to the pupil to add to his/her language repertoire, and the pupil as a speaker in his/her own right, since he/she is already fully competent in his/her regional and colloquial uses. Lemle closes her argument saying that "this view of language education will spare the child several traumas. Firstly the psychological trauma for having his/her self-esteem downgraded by being labelled as a 2nd class speaker. Secondly the socio-psychological trauma of being forced to undergo a language metamorphosis which will eventually separate him/her from family and peers - all this under the guise of an educational objective".

This is certainly one of the factors involved in the sense of insecurity shown by the average Brazilian as he/she expresses himself/herself verbally. As the saying goes, "Portuguese is a difficult language, in fact one of the most difficult languages in the world". It is impossible for such an attitude to go unnoticed, since it

carries psycho-social overtones that are clear indicators of the type of relation that holds between the school and the average Brazilian speaker.

Yet, alternative proposals lack a formal basis, since linguistic studies in Brazil have not advanced far enough to provide educators with language descriptions capable of supplying them with parameters for dialect choices and language education planning.

The NURC Project (Cultivated Urban Norm Study Project) (Cf. Castilho, 1984) is the most comprehensive attempt, to my knowledge, to identify the Brazilian cultivated urban norm, but unfortunately it has been discontinued and we have been left to wonder what this urban norm is like. Applied linguists will certainly resent this loss, as the NURC Project could perhaps have been taken as a starting point for language education planning. This lack of information on the language actually used by Brazilians has led younger teachers of Portuguese to follow the example set by their forerunners,i.e. to search for models in traditional grammar. Linguistically-oriented literacy experts started a revision of the Primers in use in the schools but stopped short of any major structural changes in the Primer's language. Their concerns led them no further than substituting a few local words for the standard vocabulary traditionally used in the Primer. This was done on the belief that regional variation was lexical variation only. Therefore, textbooks were found to be inadequate on account of their neutrality in relation to the local names of things, not for their syntactic, textual and discoursive quality. Thus, aspects of the core of language that truly made for the distance between standard and popular dialects have not been considered.

Regional planning in language education in Brazil must not ignore the linguistic and social history of the country. According to Moraes (1980), Brazilian Portuguese is a post-creole continuum, and the poor standards of language education in Brazil are brought about by a misunderstanding of the linguistic history of the country. The analysis carried out by Moraes (1980) reveals that the Brazilian Portuguese language varieties operate along a dynamic continuum, i.e. they are non-discrete systems that undergo progressive restructuring as they lose their creole-based features and approach the so-called standard.

We cannot, therefore, think of the Brazilian Portuguese dialects as coexisting systems. The way in which they relate to one another and to the school norm leaves us in no doubt that they have moved along a unidirectional axis, and this could well be identified as a decreolization process. According to that analysis, the emerging new standard results from a reversion in the process of decreolization and shares features with the popular dialects and the standard norm.

Such degrees of approximation can be reduced to three main areas: urban, suburban (i.e. dialects spoken by populations living in the outskirts of the larger towns) and rural.

The increase in the population of Greater Vitória results from migration from the rural areas. The city of Vitória is reported to have been one of the fastest-growing cities in Brazil during the 1960/1970 decade (Cf. Espírito Santo, 1977). Living conditions on the periphery of the city are even more precarious than they had been in the country. It seems, then, that massive migration together with a decline in the standards of education are at the onset of recreolization, since the existing schools were not equipped to retain a minimum standard of excellence while catering for such a heterogeneous ever-growing population.

This situation has been acknowledged by the State Government in the two important documents which are examined in detail by Moraes (1980). They are: Estrutura Demográfica do Espírito Santo 1940/2000 (1977) and Espírito Santo: crescimento e desigualdade social: Análise introdutória de alguns dados da pesquisa socioeconômica 1977 (1979). From the latter I draw information which shows that educational authorities are no longer indifferent to the problem of inequality of opportunity for school children.

Signs of this growing awareness can be detected in the following excerts from the documents just mentioned:

"Success in school is in turn unequal for the various social classes. One of the causes for these different levels of achievement has to do with curriculum and course design as well as with the adoption of evaluation models which do not take into account the child's social background and personal history".

These factors are also examined in the document, and the

authors conclude that the educational problems facing socially-deprived children are connected with their previous life experience and "a diffuse kind of home education in which the predominant values differ from those imposed by the school".

Clearly, what is being suggested is that the Brazilian school is implementing an educational programme which is dissociated from the pupils' real needs. Paulo Freire (1978) never tires of insisting that this is not education for freedom.

We have reasons to believe that the regional reality which I have been protraying is a good sample of the country as a whole.

These considerations have served as background to a research project which I have carried out in an urban and a suburban school in the city of Vitória, Brazil. Although my findings have led me to shift the focus of the investigation to the artificiality of the school dialect and the anger in the pedagogical discourse, I am not discarding nor underestimating the importance of coupling my previous proposal (Cf. Moraes et alii, 1985) with an alternative language education programme which will cater for those three segments of the school clientele.

At the moment, I am quite satisfied that language and education experts are initiating an interaction which can end up in a joint effort to supply the educational system with the linguistic information needed to design textbooks and other materials with urban, suburban and rural children as addressers and addressees of their own education.

As Moraes (1980) says, linguistic information should be the basis of any educational programme geared to the achievement of higher standards of verbal communication. My analysis points in two different, but complementary directions:

(1) The establishment of an emerging standard and the necessity for surveying the Espírito Santo post-creole language systems so as to provide a comprehensive picture of this new standard, as it presents itself today in real communicative acts.

(2) The admission of the fact that the Brazilian school does not take linguistic variation into consideration for the designing of language programmes is bringing about problems whose solution ought to be sought in linguistic science.

My proposal, then, is that a language education plan should:

(1)identify regional and social language varieties and set up local targets.

(2)adapt syllabuses and textbooks so as to facilitate the transmission of those targets. Social grammars will then result.

(3)encourage self-expression in the local variety, both in speech and writing.

(4)introduce the standard norm gradually, by means of dialectal translation.

Considering that prestige and stigma are not similarly perceived everywhere, the actual language forms to be incorporated in language programmes and textbooks ought to respond to regional requirements.

I suggest that a language education programme based on these propositions be carried out experimentally in a vernacular-speaking community, perhaps in a city suburb. Expectations are that at the end of the experiment speakers' verbal performance will have changed in such a way as to improve their relationship with their local communities, with the school and with the community at large. This will be achieved by means of the speakers' gradual expansion of their language repertoire and the school's changed attitude towards their native language varieties.

I have coined the expression inter-dialectal translation (Moraes, 1984) to refer to this gradual move from the vernacular to the standard dialect. This is certainly not just a handy label. It is my belief that language education regional planning is very much a question of methodological adequacy.

In fact, an experiment carried out in Norway and reported by Bull (1982) reinforces this belief. In this experiment 10 groups of 7-year-old school beginners from three different geographical areas (both urban and rural) and speaking three completely different dialects, not considered equally socially acceptable, were initially taught to read and write in their own dialects. The experiment was controlled by other groups of children, similarly selected, who were submitted to traditional teaching, i.e. they were taught to read and write in the standard language.

Dialect children were later to be taught one of the standard languages of Norway which, according to Bull, were to be introduced gradually.

The experiment led Bull to conclude that what he calls the principle of dialect teaching has pedagogical advantages and "is a fair claim on social justice, from the point of view of the dialect-speakers".

Results showed that dialect children read faster and better than the control subjects and that the poorer children were the ones who benefitted the most.

Though Bull claims that dialect-teaching is not a method, but a principle, when he refers to it as a tool, I infer that, beyond its technical function as a medium of education, dialect-teaching can be seen as a means of acquiring the standard language in a more rational and productive way. It is, therefore, a principle and a method.

There are striking similarities between the principles underlying the Norwegian experiment and language education planning as proposed by Marcos (1984). My proposal is based on three main points: (1) gradual passage from the spoken to the written language, with acceptance of dialect-correlating errors in the first stages, (2) gradual introduction of the standard language, and (3) inter-translation from dialect into standard, with explanation and discussion of differences. The third step presupposes the development of the children's metalinguistic consciousness and their constant interaction with language as activity.

Bull states in the abstract to his paper that his project "deals with initial teaching of reading and writing and the relationship between written and spoken language". Later on he says that, as the teachers started to use the standardized written language in their teaching, they were explicit about it. And he insists that, in his opinion, "the principle of dialect teaching, i.e. starting in the vernacular and gradually approaching the standard, being very explicit about the process, made the dialect children more conscious about the relationship between spoken and written language".

One of the final tests to which the subjects were submitted also approximates Norwegian and Brazilian research.

In the Norwegian experiment, children were given an

opportunity for creative writing. Results showed that children in the control group copied texts directly from the Primer "instead of writing creatively themselves".

This finding parallels our data as well as the data brought forward by Abaurre et alii (1985). We have also noticed that the child has a tendency to copy texts from the Primer instead of using their rights to voice through writing, as Abaurre et alii put it.

In the introduction to his report, Bull refers to Norway as a unique case, in the sense that it is a country where the use of dialect in school has been under discussion over the past 100 years.

In that respect, Brazilian research still has a long way to go to persuade educational authorities to, at least, allow for this topic to be discussed in the official educational domains.

In Brazil, ás in most countries, science and education run parallel. They do not interact nor do they ever cross each other's ways. This can be noticed in a Report (Brazil, 1986) recently submitted to the Federal Governmment by a team of language experts entrusted with the task of examining language education in the country and expected to come forward with a proposal for change in first language education.

In that Report we read that "the ultimate goal of Portuguese teaching is the (student's) control of the language of culture". It is also quite explicit that "...the methodological ways recommended are the effective use of the language of culture". The Committee also acknowledges as the teacher's "important and fundamental task to enable the student to have direct access to the literary work starting in primary school".

This sounds like a return to pre-linguistic times. To me it seems that the doorway to the so-called "language of culture" and to literature is the gradual development by the students of their linguistic self-respect and their recognition of the various functions of language. This will certainly make for the student's gradual acquisition of other language functions and uses, among which can be included the literary styles.

In my opinion, it is high time Brazilians discovered the importance of language education for successful communication in the

diversified situations in which speech occurs. None but a pluridialectal school can achieve this.

I rather suspect that language education in Brazil will not be any help until it begins to deal with problems related to form and meaning at the level of discourse, since it is at the level of discourse that communication realizes itself by means of diversified formal language structures.

It may at first appear that I am advocating a provincialist approach to language educational planning. But this could not be farther from the truth. I believe that this methodological approximation to the standard norm will eventually cause different speakers to merge into a sole speech community in ways that are neither repressive nor traumatic. It will certainly be an unprejudiced pluridialectal community, open to the acceptance of difference and, therefore, better prepared, or - should we say - educated to live in and with the world.

REFERENCES


1 - Abaurre, M. B. M et alii (1985). Leitura e escrita na vida e na escola. Campinas, S.P. (mimeo).

2 - Brasil. Ministério da Educação (1986). Diretrizes para o aperfeiçoamento do ensino/aprendizagem da língua portuguesa, Comissão Nacional para o Aperfeiçoamento da Língua Materna. Relatório Conclusivo, Brasília, D.F.

3 - Bull, Tove (1982). Mother Tongue Teaching and Learning: Teaching School Beginners to read and write in the vernacular. Norway (mimeo).

4 - Castilho, A. T. de. (1984). Informações sobre o Projeto de Estudo da Norma Urbana Lingüística Culta (Projeto NURC). Cadernos de Estudos Lingüísticos nº 6, Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem, Campinas, S.P.

5 - Espírito Santo, Estrutura Demográfica do Espírito Santo 1940/2000 (1977). Fundação Jones dos Santos Neves, Vitória, E.S.

6 - _____: Crescimento e desigualdade Social (1979). Secretaria de Estado do Planejamento. Vitória, E.S.

7 - Freire, P. (1978). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Penguin Books, Great Britain.

8 - Lemle, M. (1978). Heterogeneidade dialetal: um apelo à pesquisa. Tempo Brasileiro (53/54), Rio de Janeiro.

9 - Moraes, E. R. (1980). Some aspects of syntactic variation in Brazilian Portuguese. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland (Unpublished).

10 - _____: (1984). Alguns aspectos da variação sintática no português do Brasil. Tempo Brasileiro (78/79), Rio de Janeiro.

11 - Moraes, E. R. et alii. (1985). O dialeto da alfabetização e o dialeto do alfabetizando. Research report submitted to the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP), (Unpublished).

12 - Rodrigues, A. D. (1965), Tarefas da lingüística no Brasil. Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

13 - Soares, M. B. (1983). Aprendizagem da língua materna: problemas e perspectivas. Em Aberto, Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Pedagógicas (INEP), Brasília, D.F.